5-16-2002

The relationship between thematic teacher teaming and its effects upon student achievement and cross-curricula cohesiveness

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEMATIC TEACHER TEAMING AND ITS EFFECTS UPON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND CROSS-CURRICULA COHESIVENESS

By

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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
At
Rowan University
May 2002

Approved by Dr. Kathy Sernak

Date Approved _May 16, 2002_

ABSTRACT

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2002

Dr. Kathy Sernak

Education Administration and Supervision

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between thematic teacher teaming and its effects upon student achievement and cross-curricula cohesiveness. The data were collected from a teacher questionnaire, student group discussions, school attendance and test scores, student assessments, and field notes. These various methods produced information about the development, understanding, enforcement, and collaboration regarding team teaching and its effects upon student achievement. A review of literature attributed initial positive teacher and student responses and later decreased lack of participation with inconsistent enforcement and support from administration. The findings of this study showed that this school did not develop a well-planned teacher teaming process. Therefore, the teaming process and profound increased student achievements were not significantly achieved, although, teacher collaboration, and cross-curricula cohesiveness increased.

Mini-Abstract

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This study researched whether restructuring instructional planning for teachers' increase the academic learning process for students and create cross-curricula cohesiveness. In conclusion, thematic team teaching had both positive and negative effects. Overall, teacher teaming in this school was not totally successful, but student achievement and teacher collaboration showed an initial increase.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I must give praise to Almighty God. Without his help, I would have never been able to complete this task.

Secondly, I must give thanks to my family, Juanita, Felicia, and Ashley for encouraging me to get my master's degree. Thank you for supporting and believing in me.

I cannot give enough thanks to Dr. Yorel Browne and Mrs. Robin Salaam for all of your encouragement and professional assistance. An extra special thanks is given to my godfather, Dr. J.D. King for lending a shoulder and genuinely caring for me. I also would like to thank my mentor, Mrs. Frankie Johnson for understanding when I needed to take days off work and allowing me to use school time to conduct my research. Thanks to Mr. Bo Christian for helping to find information and allowing me to use personal books that helped me to complete my studies.

A heart-felt thank you is given to Teresa McGaney-Guy for being a friend and partner through the entire ordeal. We did it!

A special thanks is given to all of my professors at Rowan University, especially Dr. Dolittle, Dr. Linsk, and Dr. Sernak. You were responsible for making sure that I understood the importance and responsibility of education and leadership.

I must give thanks to Maurice Cherry for encouraging me to continue even through rough times. I also thank Sybil Jerkins for being a support factor when I was trying to buy a house and concentrate on school at the same time.

I also give thanks to Ms. "Cookie" Jones for allowing me to use your computer

and printing my thesis work when I was stressing out! A special thanks to my good friend Shaline Browne for being so helpful and understanding. You have no idea how much you have helped me.

To my friends, Aminah Browne and Yahanne Cooper for telling me that it's all going to pay off at the end.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What can increase academic cohesiveness in curriculum and instruction? An urban school district is currently monitored by the state. If test scores do not increase there is a possibility for a state takeover. Thematic team planning correlates and weaves the subject areas under an innovative, interesting, and structured umbrella. I restructured scheduled planning periods that are designated solely for team planning. The themes are brainstormed by the teachers, which will allow instruction to be interwoven across disciplines. This is especially important since all eighth graders take the Grade Eight-Proficiency Assessment that focuses upon student's ability to express themselves in each subject area.

This study focuses upon teaching team's ability to connect each subject together under the same topic/theme. This allows the students to relate what they are doing in one class to the next. It also allows for team teaching or projects. This is a case study designed for any urban junior high school experiencing reform. The intern questioned teachers at a junior high school located in an urban setting to obtain the necessary data to fulfill the needs of the staff and students. This project is geared, toward administrators and teachers who acknowledge a need for restructuring of the current instructional planning process that will unify the disciplines. If this change is successful, it will increase learning for students and allow for innovative planning and teaching. The intern will work directly with administration and staff.

Conceptual Framework

Statement of Research Problem

Does restructuring of the instructional planning for teachers increase the academic

learning process for students and create cross-curricula cohesiveness?

Overview Questions and Subquestions

Grand Tour Questions:

Will reconstructing teaching planning periods create powerful team lesson planning?

Subsidiary Questions:

- What do the teachers think of the teaming approach?

- How has the team design influenced the way teachers view their practice?

- Will the teachers plan their lessons together?

- How effective are the teams at accomplishing their goals?

- Does team planning and teaching involve individuals' giving up or compromising?

- What will be expected from the building administrators?

- What will be the finished outcomes?

- Will team planning and teaching improve:

  a. Student attendance?
  b. Student retention?
  c. Student achievement?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to reconstruct and evaluate the thematic planning

process on the delivery of instructional learning to junior high school students using a

proactive research design. This study will result in an increase of innovative interactive

teaching across disciplines. It will enable the intern to communicate to the stakeholders

the importance of their unified involvement in the transformation of instruction to the students. The project will ensure that the academic needs of the students will be met through powerful lesson planning. At this stage of the research, the reconstruction of the instructional planning procedure will be defined generally as effective thematic teaching. Teachers at the junior high school rarely plan together. Many of them close their classroom doors and are unseen until the end of the day. The intended procedural change will be an increase of teacher's, administrators, and students' better understanding of the mission, goals, objectives, and needs of school as whole.

The leadership skills to be developed will provide the intern with the opportunity to implement a change process for organizational change and professional growth allowing diversified opportunities for students to learn. The project will express theories and principles of organizational development while enhancing effective group process, responsibility, and accountability. It will allow opportunities for staff to develop collaborative skills (Isslc standards 1, 2, 4)

Definitions of Key Terms

Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) - State mandated proficiency test given to all public eighth grade students in New Jersey to determine level of achievement.

Level I State Monitoring- School district have complete autonomy of its districts operations. The district has satisfactorily achieved the minimum state requirements.

Level II State Monitoring- School district has not met all of the state's requirements and as a result is required to develop corrective action plans for the unsatisfactory areas. Improvement must be noted each subsequent year.

Level III State Monitoring- State takeover of all school operations

Partially Proficient- students who scored between 100-199 on the state GEPA test.

Proficient- students who scored between 200-249 on the state GEPA test.

Advanced Proficient- students who scored between 250-300 on the GEPA test

Deliminations and Limitations

The thematic lesson planning process is geared toward all stakeholders at inner city Junior High Schools that are in the process of reform and instructional state monitoring. This study will take place in a middle school located in an urban area on the East Coast. Four teaching teams will participate. Each team member will volunteer to chart the thematic plans on an approved pace planning form each month and give the results to principal. The themes will be shared at the staff meetings so that each team is familiar. Each week, individual teams will meet again to discuss what is going on in their classrooms, how to make it better, and to ensure that the pace is followed. Teams will most likely, meet together three out of the five planning periods per week.

The limitations of this project will stem from the resistance to change. Many of the teachers do not feel comfortable working together, because they have not in the past. This can be overcome by allowing the stakeholders to take leadership roles in the process. Teacher leadership roles are rotated so that no one dominates the position. Teachers in each team will create an agreement of commitment, which will foster open communication in ways that will build trust.

Setting of the Study

The city is a mid-size city with a population of over 40,000. It has a beach that stretches around the entire area, with a boardwalk. It is an urban area with about 10

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housing projects with 90 percent of the tenants receiving financial assistance. The city houses a Boys and Girls Club, Family Center, Police Athletic League, and recreational facilities. The crime statistics is an increasingly 238.3% from the year 1999 with an 18 percent unemployment rate (lowest in the state). The city has a very diverse population. Almost fifty percent of the people in the city are African-American, 25% Caucasian, 20% Hispanic, and 5% other. The general tax rate per $100 is 3,090. The school district receives $8,000 per pupil.

The city houses 12 casinos, which are the major source of employment for the majority of the population. The casinos were originally built to enhance and contribute greatly to the community and keep the down the taxes. Each casino adopted a school for the purpose of monetary aid and bridging the community. Consequently, the district is not entitled to certain grants and programs that surrounding districts may receive. Unfortunately, the district has not received significant help from the casinos. Therefore, the facilities are deteriorating and old.

The district is very politically tied to the mayor and governor. In 1995, the current middle school was deemed hazardous and the staff and students were moved to another school in the city. This school was a focal point of the city, and about 15 million dollars were granted to revamp the school. The following year, the governor, mayor, and superintendent announced that a tunnel project was on the way. The area in which the school stood was crucial to the project. The state sent monitors to the school that deemed it unsuitable and condemned the building. The school was demolished and the land was sold for the tunnel project. The students and staff were sent back to their original building, previously deemed hazardous.

The school system located in an urban community in southeastern New Jersey has 5 elementary schools of PK-6, K-7, one eighth grade, and one 9-12 newly built high school. The students may attend two charter schools, one transitional, and three alternative school programs. The school district has an enrollment of over 7,000 students including sending districts. The school board is comprised of 11 members, two from sending districts. The district has one superintendent, two assistant superintendents, seven principals, and six supervisors. The district has very low-test scores and is currently under level II state monitoring. The elementary and middle school does not receive a substantial amount of community support. The middle school's parent organization is comprised of three members. Parents from the sending district are more vocal at the high school level.

The students and teachers in this study are enrolled or employed at the middle school. The students attend the school for one year. The school is over one hundred years old and consists of two parts, the South Wing (built in 1900), and the North Wing (built in 1910). This school was the districts' original high school. There are no parking facilities for teachers or visitors, forcing them either to illegally park at the local bus terminal and walk to the building, or pay a parking lot a monthly rate (without reimbursement).

There are 304 African-American students, 131 Hispanic Students, 14 Caucasian students, and 49 Asian/Pacific Island Students enrolled at the junior high school. The student body is comprised of 278 males and 220 females (See Table 1). There is an average of 19 students in each heterogeneously grouped class. There are two bi-lingual classrooms with a 10% L.E.P. (limited English proficiency) and one E.S.L (English as a

second language) class in which the students learn to speak English through their Native language. There are over 32 different languages and dialects spoken in the district (See table 2 for Language Diversities). The educational instruction takes place within four pods. Each pod contains a group of teachers who work closely with the students. Last Year, the students would have teachers on the South Wing and then had to travel to the North Wing for classes. Through teaming, the students will stay on one floor with all their teachers together. The average class size is about 19 students per class. The attendance rate dropped from 95% in 1999 to 91% in 2000. Currently, the enrollment of the school is about 498 students. This number is subject to change due high transient rates. Ninety-four percent of the students participate in the free or reduced lunch program of the school; a program developed exclusively for low income families (See Table 3). The faculty at the school is comprised of 42 classroom teachers, two guidance counselors, one principal, one vice-principal, a full time nurse, one secretary, and an in-house child study team. Four out of every five teachers possess a master's degree or higher. A unique feature of the school is that it is comprised of only eighth grade students from across the entire district.

Enrollment Statistics

Ethnic Summary

Description	Male	Female	Total	Percent
African-American	171	133	304	64.0
Caucasian	7	7	14	2.81
Hispanic	75	56	131	26.30
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	24	49	6.89
Total	278	220	498	100%

Table 1

Language Diversity

First Language Spoken at home in order of frequency.

Language	Percent
English	66%
Spanish	25%
Urdu	2%
Vietnamese	2%
Bengali	2%
Cantonese	1%
Gujarati	1%
Others	1%

Percent of LEP (Limited English Proficient) students: 10.0%

Table 2

Student Lunch Participation Profile

Cost	Boys	Girls	Total
Free	244	182	426
Reduced Price	21	18	39
Full Price	13	20	33
Total	278	220	498

Table 3

<u>Significance</u>

The significance of this project is the belief that teachers are the primary resource for student learning. Good planning is crucially important, especially at the Eighth Grade level with the GEPA test. If teachers work together, lesson plans will be more powerful. Using themes to relate the disciplines will make instruction meaningful to the children. Obviously, the current teaching methods are not improving test scores, so intervention is greatly warranted. Constant assessment will prove elevations in student growth.

The district's concern about Level II state monitoring and the possibility of a state takeover has forced the district to develop many corrective action plans. Since the school was cited for daily attendance below minimum standards and the test scores have not significantly increased, I reviewed the State Report Card to discover the reasons for the poor results. Attendance is a crucial issue in low-test scores. As students are absent from the classroom, they are not exposed to the instructional information needed to pass the GEPA test in the spring. Part of the significance of the study address whether the teaming approach improves attendance. If students learn to enjoy learning and its significance to their lives then it may be an encouragement for them to attend school daily.

Currently, the school is in Level II state monitoring. In 1994, the findings in the New Jersey School Report Card placed the district in Level II state monitory for three years. One reason cited for Level II monitoring was the below average percent of students scoring below a 200 on the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessments (GEPA) (see table 4). In the 1999-2000 school year, only thirty percent of the students passed all three

parts of the GEPA (Language Arts, Math, and Social Science). Another reason the district was cited for Level II placement was because of high student drop out and low attendance rates and at the junior high school level (See table 5).

With the increasing concern for student achievement from the state, it is my belief that teaming will increase student learning through a thematic, cohesive, interdisciplinary approach. It is with great hope that through my investigation I can recommend to the entire district to adopt the same approach.

Grade Eight Proficiency Assessments 2000-2001

Language Arts Literacy

	Number Included	**Partially Proficient Number (score between 100-199)**	**Partially Proficient Percent**	Proficient Number (score between 200-249)	Proficient Percent	Advanced Proficient Number (score between 250-300)	Advanced proficient Percent
Total students	358	**270**	**75.4**	88	24.6	0	0.0
General Education Students	283	**198**	**70.0**	85	30.0	0	0.0
Special Education Students	53	**52**	**98.1**	1	1.9	0	0.0
Limited English Proficient Students	23	**21**	**91.3**	2	8.7	0	0.0

Mathematics

	Number Included	**Partially Proficient Number (score between 100-199)**	**Partially Proficient Percent**	Proficient Number (score between 200-249)	Proficient Percent	Advanced Proficient Number (score between 250-300)	Advanced proficient Percent
Total students	369	**317**	**85.9**	46	12.5	6	1.6
General Education Students	292	**241**	**82.5**	45	15.4	6	2.1
Special Education Students	56	**56**	**100.0**	0	0.0	0	0.0
Limited English Proficient Students	23	**22**	**95.7**	1	4.3	0	0.0

Table 4

Note: A passing score for the New Jersey Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment is 200

Science

	Number Included	Partially Proficient Number (score between 100-199)	Partially Proficient Percent	Proficient Number (score between 200-249)	Proficient Percent	Advanced Proficient Number (score between 250-300)	Advanced proficient Percent
Total students	367	266	72.5	97	26.4	4	1.1
General Education Students	291	196	67.4	91	31.3	4	1.4
Special Education Students	54	51	94.4	3	5.6	0	0.0
Limited English Proficient Students	24	21	87.5	3	12.5	0	0.0

Table 4 (continued)

Note: A passing score for the New Jersey Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment is 200

Student Attendance Rates

Percent of students present on average each day

	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
This school	88.7	94.0	91.1
State Average	94.2	94.5	95.0

Table 5

Organization of the Study

The remainder of the study will focus on the review of literature related to the study, which will be organized into two sections. The first section focuses on reorganization and the positive effects of teaming. The second section discusses the dilemmas of teaming. Chapter 3 addresses five areas related to research design that are used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research and answers, what information was found and its meanings. The last chapter describes the conclusion of the study with implications and further study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

This chapter presents a selected review of literature related to this study and is organized into two sections. The first section focuses on the benefits of teacher collaboration. The next section discusses the barriers to teacher teaming.

Benefits of teacher collaboration

Teacher involvement strategies have become more prevalent in all types of organizations. Once an organization understands a need for change, among the education reform initiatives, teacher collaboration is important (Crow & Pounder, 2000). In many schools teachers do not foster relationships to make connections between subjects to improve and integrate academic instruction.

Teacher collaboration as defined by Lankard (1994), explains why the practice of working in teams has become increasingly important. She states that interdisciplinary teams integrate new programs while engaging in meaningful long-range plans. Furthermore, she contends that cross-functional teaming that bridge together all stakeholders in an organization increases communication and involvement, as well as productivity.

In "Work Teams in Schools", Oswald (1996) agree with Crow and Pounder's belief that teams have many positive effects. They express that the more people are involved with the decision-making process, the more likely the decision will be

implemented. Also, team members can continually learn from one another and risk-taking becomes more likely because of the collective cohesiveness of the group. Furthermore, information is disseminated from a team of teachers with various resources and skills. More importantly, the authors noted that the most meaningful advantage is a sense of "teamness" with the feeling that "we can make it happen" which increases excitement in teaching and learning.

Research findings indicate factors to insure quality teams. Oswald (1996) states two factors that are essential to teams: bonding and cohesiveness. The author contends that both establish team culture, which is the strength and potential of the team. It develops because people join to form a united and cohesive culture. Therefore, bonding ensures that teams will dedicate time, knowledge, pride, and loyalty to the team and its goals. Inger (1993) agrees with Oswald that the cohesive benefit is defined by a sense of togetherness within a group. It creates a feeling of belonging that ratifies accountability. They believe that cohesiveness promotes high-quality communication.

Inger (1993) formally identified the benefits of interdisciplinary team teaching. He states that such instruction improves student behavior, achievement, and attitude. Students gain a sense of coherence and consistency between disciplines and their improved behavior stems from a better learning environment. Ngeow (1998) agrees with Inger that especially in urban school settings, schools where teachers plan by themes together develop a more unified program that exemplifies successful collaboration. Another benefit is increased teacher satisfaction and adaptability through collaboration because it breaks down the barrier of isolation in the classroom (especially in urban schools such as the district identified in this study). Inger mentions that cohesion is

extremely beneficial for beginning teachers because a feeling of togetherness saves them from the usual "sink for swim" situation (p. 35). As for experienced teachers, Inger notes it prevents end of the year burnout and increases enthusiasm. He further expresses that for teachers in urban settings, who are faced with crises, the risk of burn out is even greater. Ngeow (1998) also highlights that in such schools, cohesive collaboration aids teachers with better coping skills and in gaining more control over their daily work lives. She contends that teacher teamwork makes complex situations more manageable and fosters unification with instruction, which enhances their effectiveness in the classroom.

Ngeow (1998) has identified instructional phases of collaborative teaching and learning. She notes five phases for designing and planning collaborative learning instruction with classrooms: engagement, exploration, transformation, presentation, and reflection. Rottier (2001) agrees, but further explains that the effectiveness of the phases stems from thematic team planning among disciplines because it ties instruction to learning. It allows learners to share and relate their thinking across subjects enabling improvement with their learning.

In Ngeow's "engagement phase", the teacher bridges the disciplines by providing the class with a collaborative activity. The task is designed to provide authentic and meaningful activities that give the students a sense of ownership and understanding, because they can relate it to the other subjects. During "exploration", students work in-

groups to explore ideas and information. Teachers encourage groups to demonstrate their

learning through different strategies, such as K-W-H-L-S. This particular strategy can be

used to insure that every student pursues goals that are individually helpful; yet relates to

the common goal of the activity. The components of the strategy are:

K: What I know (prior knowledge)
W: What I want to learn
H: How I will learn it and relate it to other subjects and areas in my life
L: What I actually learned
S: How I shared, or will share what I have learned

Ngeow's third phase or "transformation" of knowledge allows teacher teams to

correlate their lessons by allowing students to engage in lessons that organize, clarify,

and synthesize learning concepts across disciplines. Teachers can hold students

accountable for what they learned in other classes. This phase is crucial because it

requires learners to discuss and contribute information to each other. The "presentation"

phase grants learners the opportunity to present their findings through a culmination

activity in front of an audience. At this stage, students contribute their findings to make

up a larger learning outcome (p. 30). In the last phase students can reflect on what they

have learned and offer ideas for improvement.

Crow and Pounder (2000) supports Ngeow's findings that thematic team planning

fosters meaningful instruction, because it correlates knowledge with a consistency that

allows learners to effectively use what they learn in their actions and behaviors.

Rottier (2000) suggest other benefits of teaming in schools such as goal setting.

He contends that teams should adopt challenging measurable goals that become the

team's focal point for instruction. What Rottier concludes in his research is that sharing workloads amongst all team members will have an impact on the academic performance of students. Additionally, team members must utilize common planning periods with great discipline by improving the teams' ability to problem-solve. Using problem-solving and conflict resolution, teams learn to analyze a problem and develop ways to solve them. He concludes that the impact of teaming in schools is phenomenal, especial for middle to junior high levels.

Research shows that students with low socioeconomic statuses usually produce lower standardized test scores. Arhar and Kromrey (1993) suggest that "interdisciplinary teaming appears to have the strongest impact on student teacher relationships in low SES schools. Organizing teachers into interdisciplinary teams provide conditions that may reduce the alienation of teachers. Empowered, supported teachers are more likely to provide support for their students" (p. 31). These authors also encourage low SES schools to establish teacher teams because they increase teacher-students bonding as well as academic learning. These authors support my hypothesis that urban schools benefit from interdisciplinary team teaching.

Crow and Pounder (2000) discuss the impact of teacher teams in schools and how it affects student learning while fostering cohesiveness amongst colleges. The authors express that there are many types of work teams that appear in school, but interdisciplinary instructional teams prove the most significant school reform because they involve school faculty, directly affect the instruction of students, and restructure student/school outcomes. Hackman and Oldham's (1980) model of effective work groups support this theory accurate. The authors' design suggests effective work groups

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are "those whose output meets or exceeds organizational standards of quality and whose social progress maintains or enhances the capability of the members to work together on subsequent tasks" (p. 220). The model suggests that interdisciplinary teams need professional development to improve relevant work skills, communication skills, instructional planning, and student development. The authors highlight that teams will go through different stages because a fully functioning team takes three years or more to develop. Crow and Pounder expanded their research by studying middle schools that implemented teaming and how it affected them. The results were consistent with the other authors. They reported that teachers who are part of a team have gained more knowledge of other teachers' work, which helped them to coordinate their instruction. Furthermore, their research stated that teaming teachers reported more knowledge of students' academic and personal lives as well as increased contact with parents than ever before. The authors also conducted a comparative study between teachers in a team versus non-teamed teachers and their work arrangements. They revealed that teachers in teams reported greater work motivation, growth, satisfaction, and professional commitment than that of non-teamed workers. Studies have identified relevant outcomes in student achievement in standardized test measures in reading, math, and language due to interdisciplinary teaming. Although these findings help to frame my study, they suggest bias because the studies were conducted in suburban middle schools instead of urban settings.

Barriers to Team Teaching

Although many of the authors mentioned reached similar conclusions and confirmed the significance of my study, many dilemmas remain. Rottier (2000) presented some positive outcomes of teaming, but reached similar conclusions with Kruse & Louis (1997) that some teams remain complacent by a limited belief of exactly what teaming can and should be. Rottier expresses that many team member use common planning period as a "griping session" to talk negatively about student behavior. On the contrary, Valentine and Whitaker (1997) ensure that teaming and common planning period are effective if the following steps are followed:

- Improve the foundations of teaming by establishing measurable team goals and determining team ground rules

- Demonstrate greater discipline in the use of common planning periods

- Improve the team's capability of making decisions, solving problems, and managing conflict

- Improve leadership at the team and building levels

- Provide team members with on-going staff development (p. 214)

Kruse and Louis (1997) studied four middle schools that experienced team teaching, Aspen Glen Middle (rural), Shining Rock Middle (valley), Copan Middle (suburban), and Baldwin Middle (industrial). The authors noted that although their findings consider teaming as a tool, but it also can create tensions across teams. They further conclude that teaming causes dilemmas for a schoolwide community as a whole, because it causes separations amongst colleagues. In the article, teachers expressed that although teaming offers advantages, "teams also undermine the ability for the whole faculty to attend to the business of the whole school (p.265)." The authors discovered that teaming may pose as

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a problem for staff to handle the demands of being a team member with that of the school as a community. The research suggests that teaming makes it hard for staffs to establish a sense of shared vision throughout the school. The authors stated five specific dilemmas that schools face when implementing teams as well as effective whole school communities. These dilemmas relate to: time management, student development, teacher development, autonomy, and conflict management (p. 266).

Teachers complained that their experience limited the amount of time on non-classroom work, which created a barrier between whole-school issues and teaming concerns. All four schools reported that they had less time for faculty meetings, which formerly occurred once a week, with teaming happened once per month. The study also expressed that teachers did not have time for departmental, team, or individual planning and that administration used most of their teaming periods for other use, such as mini-workshops and guidance meetings.

In 1993, an article in <u>ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education</u> presented barriers to teacher collaboration in the area of subject affiliation and departmental organization. Inger (1993) stated that most academic teachers consider themselves as subject matter specialists and stereotyped the importance of other subjects, especially with vocational teachers. This created animosity between teachers who feel forced to work with one another.

According to Oswald (1996), teams must overcome common problems. His research states that teams fail because of five reasons:

- Members don't understand the team's mission
- Members don't understand their own roles and responsibilities

- Members do not understand "how to do their tasks or how to work as part of a team".

- Members don't buy into the team's function, purpose, or goals

- Members reject their roles or responsibilities

Lankard (1994) supports Oswald's findings that many problems between team members are due to poor communication skills and communication differences. Oswald states that one members of a team can create animosity by being too negative, refusing to compromise, arguing, desiring for attention, or attacking fellow members personally. Lankard (1994) contends that, "the problem with communication is that people harbor certain beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and values that cause them to interpret messages differently (p. 152)". On the contrary, Oswald expresses that initial training and continuous assessment can prevent such problems from occurring.

Conclusion

Literature and research studies are limited in teaming in urban schools, but where it does effectively exist, it is powerful for teachers and students. While literature suggests some barriers, intervention, continuous staff development, and training produce effective collaboration. Therefore, urban educators must recognize that, students' academic and instructional enhancement lies within teachers' ability to work as a team. Until these issues are addressed, students' test scores and curricular cohesiveness will undoubtedly not increase.

The Institute for Educational Leadership (1994) offers tips for strategies to enhance qualities within teams:

- limit talking time by remembering that there are others in the group, don't interrupt, listen actively

- allow others to be silent but elicit their views by asking questions or inviting their opinions, encourage rather than dominate,

- Offer only constructive criticism, and support those who are unfairly attacked.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Recent years have called for reform plans and models that increase student achievement, especially on standardized testing. Most inner city school districts are faced with the dilemma that test scores are low and students are not passing state mandated testing. Research has indicated that team teaching is a valuable approach to increasing student learning and academic achievement. Although most research conducted has been in suburban areas, research has indicated that teaming can have a positive affect in urban settings alike.

This study focused on eighth grade teachers and students in a middle school in an urban community in Southeastern New Jersey. Participants included are core content and specialty area teachers as well as the students. The students are all middle school eighth graders who have gone from being confined to one classroom for all core subjects to switching classes every forty minutes between a team of teachers. There are four teams of five core content area teachers and two specialty teachers. The teams are comprised of a reading, writing, math, science, and social studies teacher. The specialty area teachers include physical education (gym), art, consumer science, Spanish, and technology education (shop). The specialty teachers' switch between the four teams every quarter. There are four quarters per year. The consumer science and technology education teachers exchange students in the middle of a quarter in order to accommodate each team. Teacher experience range from 0-30 years. Team 1 is comprised of all veteran teachers

with over 15 years of experience. Team 2 includes two new teachers and two veteran teachers. Team 3 has one veteran teacher, one new teacher, and two teachers with at least six years of experience. Team 4 has two veteran teachers, one new, and a long term substitute teacher. Teachers and students were chosen because they were the target population and most valuable resources. Both entities were directly affected by the implementation of the teaming process.

I relied on journal reflections to confirm the coded data from the questionnaire. Results from the questionnaire were analyzed to demonstrate patterns of responses that justified the research questions and hypothesis. I looked for clue words and phrases that were common amongst teachers. The answers reflected the validity of the study. The questionnaire is comprised of eight open-ended questions that require the teachers' to explain their responses. The research tool was designed to take approximately thirty minutes to complete.

The questionnaire was designed to answer the questions surrounding the research. The questions were devised to justify the hypothesis. The research sought to discover the effectiveness of common teacher planning periods to powerful team lesson planning and its effects upon student academic growth. The project also examined the connection of teacher collaboration to student attendance rates. The questionnaire method was chosen due to the personalities of the staff and based upon research of other studies conducted on teaming. I asked veteran teachers that I trust whether they felt that most teachers were willing to be interviewed or fill out a questionnaire. These teachers pointed out that due to lack of trust and respect for administration, most teachers would not risk being interviewed in fear that they would be revealed. This information was valuable so that I

would not receive biased information. Crow & Pounder (2000) experienced the exact dilemma. The teachers that they interviewed expressed organizational constraints and that their overcontrolling principal failed to provide support or communication with the staff. A questionnaire allowed the staff to openly express themselves and reveal pertinent information while maintaining confidentiality. I chose a personable approach to disseminate the questionnaire as well as collection of the data. Each teacher team has a different forty-minute planning period. I met with each team on separate days during their planning period. I have briefly asked the teachers for their help with the research. Due to a personable approach, my colleagues have willingly committed to participating as long as their identities were not revealed. Kruse & Louis (1997) contended that communication with staff foster consistent teamwork and cooperation. Each teacher relied on his or her personal experience, homeroom attendance rates, student tests and assessments percentages, and team lesson plans regarding the teaming process and its effect upon student learning and achievement. Since the questionnaire took about 30 minutes to complete, I was able to collect the data at end of the period. I designated one teacher per team to place the questionnaires into a sealed envelope.

Forty student participants (ten students from each of the four teams) were randomly selected to discuss their perceptions of the teams as well as their own personal experiences and improvements in relation to academics. Students were asked for their opinion of the teaming process in pairs. I did not ask specific questions. They were allowed to openly express themselves and they controlled the direction of the conversation. Student responses were summarized in a journal. Student perceptions were compared with teacher responses to check for convergent and divergent

parallelisms. Monthly attendance reports will be analyzed and compared to the previous year. Hopefully, attendance rates will be higher due to the teaming process and communication amongst teachers.

Collected data will serve as evidence to prove that the project had an effect upon student learning, attendance, retention rates, and cross curricula cohesiveness. Data will be analyzed using a coding process checking for patterns of particular responses that appear to be similar. The coding process consists of searching for cue words such as: increase, yes, effective, work with, communicate, collaborate, and consistent. Similar responses to questions will prove or disprove that the teaming process is effective. This form of comparative data analysis is significant to the study. Responses to the questionnaire, informal student discussions, and participant observations were compared to justify my hypothesis.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study is organized into four major areas: development, understanding, implementation, and collaboration. Each area produced relevant data for analysis in an effort to discover the effectiveness between teaching teams and overall student achievement.

<u>Development</u>

Research reported by Kruse & Louis (1997) indicated that interdisciplinary teams of teachers have flourished as schools become communities of learning around issues related to students, curriculum, and instruction. Their research also suggested that teaming helps students and teachers understand and correlate practices of other teachers.

At the beginning of the school year, I discovered that at this school most of the teachers did enjoy the process as research highlighted and, from what I discovered from the students spoken with, so did many of them. Seven out of ten teachers stated that they felt that students learned more this year due to teaming. According to thirty students, teaming has allowed them to understand subject matter better when teachers use the same strategies in each class. This was evident through student's work posted throughout hallway walls and team project ideas discussed amongst student chatter. Teachers reported that students would stop into their classrooms during lunch periods just to talk about their projects. It seemed as if teachers and students were working together.

The remaining ten students believed that teaming did not help them, because if they had a problem with only one teacher that they had to change to an entirely different team. They also stated that students could not communicate outside of their team unless except during assemblies, because they traveled with the same group of students all day. One teacher stated that the teaming philosophy has been in place for years, but just given a new name.

A group of five teachers formed a committee and met during the summer of 2001 to plan strategies and procedures for the upcoming teaming process. Unfortunately, the other teachers had no participation in the development of the program or schedule. Consequently, many teachers did not support the program initially. Many of them were upset to find out that their rooms had changed at the last minute. Therefore, many teachers felt that "teaming" was forced on them without notice. Some of the teachers would make comments to each other expressing that teaming was another attempt for administration to act as if they are doing something. However, the enthusiasm of the committee teachers encouraged the majority of the staff to become open-minded and give the process a chance. These teachers would talk to their own team members and express the agenda of the summer meetings and asked them for suggestions to take back to the next committee meeting. Therefore, many teachers decided to commit to teacher teaming.

Any participation on the part of the administrators regarding the teaming process was initiated at the very beginning of the school year, but faded as weeks went on. The building principals initially met with each team during common planning periods each week. After the third week of the program's implementation, administration stopped

attending team meetings altogether. Initially all of the teaching teams appeared to appreciate the presence of administration, because it gave them a chance to show off the great teaching and learning that was going on because of the process. These teachers would meet and attend meetings prepared with ideas, student work, and an overall willingness to support the program. The committee of teachers notified the principal of many suggestions that their teammates had regarding the process and asked for another meeting to discuss them and plan ahead. Unfortunately, despite many attempts to schedule another meeting, the principal was too busy to meet and the committee members lost faith in the process, but not the idea. During many meetings with each team, the teachers would openly state that "programs do not work in this district because it is started, but never carried out, and then something else is initiated." Three out of the four teams expressed that they plan to continue to work together without support from administration and only asked them for resources as they were needed. Team 1 was comprised of all veteran teachers who have gone through many principals and programs. These teachers were very reluctant to buy into the teaming process and expressed that it would not work. These teachers decided meet once per week, but did their own thing once their doors were closed.

Research expressed that teaming improves the functioning of organizations and that it is important that work groups are cohesive for organizational performance. The implementation of teacher teams is beneficial to teachers and students and empowers them with many decision-making processes. Kruse & Louis (1997) argue that teachers obtain the greatest satisfaction from empowerment that focuses on teaching and learning, if allowed. Crow and Pounder (2000) suggested that work groups tighten the connection

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between teachers' work and student outcomes if work is organized around the student. These researchers also mentioned that administration has a profound influence on group effectiveness. They warned that the principal must provide support and facilitate communication or the process may be jeopardized. The teachers reported mixed feelings regarding the expectations of the building administrators. Teachers from team 4 expressed that administration was supportive. Whenever these teachers decided to take mini trips with students as part of a culminating activity, the principal would approve it. Nine teachers questioned felt that common planning periods for teachers were a great idea. All teachers from team four enjoyed the benefits of team teachers. They were allowed to take team trips evolving from themes and administration had moneys allocated for team instructional recreation. On the other hand, team one either disagreed or felt that administration did not support the process at all. Two teachers from this team appeared frustrated that their teaching efforts were not noticed nor were they empowered as veterans to be utilized as instructional leaders. Team 2 indicated that they did not receive the proper staff development or training. A teacher from team one recommended that administration needed to be more specific and aggressive in demanding compliance. This teacher articulated that administration initiated the program, but did not enforce it. It was left up to the teachers alone and was rarely discussed at meetings or workshops.

The purpose of teacher teams was to integrate interdisciplinary subjects in order to increase student achievement. It was developed by the intern, administration, and five volunteer teachers. At no time did each individual team or the entire staff receive formal training on the process. Teachers were sent new room and team assignments through the mail. Literature review, team discussions, and expectations were conducted by the intern.

Building administration used one-way communication by sending memos periodically. Teachers have worked together by making a commitment to help one another service each child. They have also developed forms and ways of communication on their own. Teachers from team three write notes to and from each other about certain students to find out how they were doing.

Understanding

In an effort to implement any new process, one must first understand the philosophy. However, from the responses of some teachers, I wonder how well teacher teaming was implemented. Research has supported teaming, but understanding and implementation is essential. Five teachers stated that staff meetings on "teaming" have help them to formulate guidelines on how to collaborate with teammates. Of these five teachers, three of them felt that all subjects were not included. They stated that most workshops and meetings highlighted Language Arts, but not Math. Only one teacher felt comfortable implementing the new backwards lesson planning. The other five teachers reported that they did not receive staff development that focused on teaming and that most workshops were of no value at all. They expressed that no new information was disseminated. Two teachers stated that they were totally confused and unclear of what was expected.

I discovered that "teaming" had a positive and negative affect on the teachers and students. Each teacher reported at least one specific influence that teaming had on how they view their own practice. Two teachers agreed that meeting as a team allowed them to discuss individual student behavior problems as well as which students needed

additional assistance. Many teachers expressed that working together allowed them to share and receive materials that helped them to better serve the students' needs.

From student responses during group discussions, I found that the students enjoyed team projects in which they combined their subjects into one finished product. They expressed that asking their teachers how each subject connected, allowed them to understand why they needed certain classes. Eight teachers who responded felt it was beneficial when they came together to discuss students and compared information needed to increase GEPA scores. They were able to focus on specific skills and create a common theme which enabled them to bridge the disciplines. One teacher explained that her team created a universal problem-solving chart that could be used for any subject. One day per week, each teacher used the chart during an instructional activity, so that the students could see how each subject used it. Five teachers said that they met three times a week. On Mondays, they discussed students and made recommendations to the guidance counselor that would help the students survive in school. On Wednesdays, they exchanged ideas and coordinated lessons together. On Fridays, they celebrated their successes from the week and worked on areas that needed improvement.

At the beginning of the year, Administration decided to change the form of traditional lesson planning to a process called "backwards planning." Backwards planning involved teachers' meeting to decide on finished outcome tasks surrounded by a central theme. Then teams decided what objectives were needed to achieve the finished outcome. Teachers had to create a bi-weekly or monthly unit plan. Traditionally, teachers had to hand in individual daily plans every week. With backwards planning, each team was required to hand in a unit plan as long as they met 3 times per week. At

first veteran teachers were reluctant to change. Many of them used the same plans year after year and did not want to start new ones, especially since many of them are close to retirement. After a while, some of the teams learned to enjoy planning together and handing in plans once per month as opposed to every week. Team 3 stated that it felt good to meet as colleagues and discuss how each discipline related. They also noted that team planning forced them to meet often, because each teacher had to give input. They expressed that unit planning took away the burden of weekly plans. Teachers seemed enthusiastic about team projects and teams 2 and 3 hosted an assembly displaying student work. A veteran teacher from team two highlighted that this was the first year in a long time that almost all students participated in an activity. Unfortunately, administration decided to go back to the traditional way of planning, which replaced backwards planning. The principal expressed in a memo that the state required weekly plans, so teachers had to revert to traditional planning. A teacher from team four became very upset and argued during the next staff meeting that "the principal should have done her homework before allowing us to start something new."

Eight of ten teachers reported that they enjoyed planning together earlier in the year, but now they barely meet. I discovered this after the first marking period. As I set up times to meet with each team, I found it increasingly impossible to find a good time in which all members could be present. One teacher mentioned that their team used to plan all lessons together. Another teacher stated that they created open-ended questions together as a means of preparing for the GEPA, but mentioned that it was something that they always did. Specialty area teachers mentioned that they were never part of the planning process and since they switch from teams so frequently, they did not attend any

meetings. Two teachers reported they did not participate in team planning, because they felt that more training was needed. They also expressed that they struggled with backwards planning.

<u>Implementation</u>

To receive the maximum benefits of the teaming process, everyone including teachers, students, and administration must work together. Most teachers agreed that student test scores were substantially low and that different teaching strategies were needed to improve them. The next step was to organize the teachers' schedules so that each team had a common planning period in which they could meet. The teachers had to devise a pre-test incorporating each of the four core subjects as a means of determining the levels of each student. Then teachers had to work together to come up with a common theme with culminating and bridging activities that allowed them to accomplish the end goal. The goal was to create a unit project stemming from the theme. The team unit lesson plan (backwards planning) explained in detail what the students were to learn, how, why, and what they were expected to do. Initially, teams one, two, and three met 3 times per week to discuss the unit plan, make revisions where necessary, and share results. Team four met once per week. At the beginning of the year, I walked around the building during planning periods and witnessed teachers meeting and exchanging ideas. In addition, it was easy for parents to meet with these teachers, because they were all in one classroom. I rarely met with team four as a team. I usually met with them individually as I walked into their classrooms.

Research has proven that "teaming" is beneficial when trying to increase student achievement. The program must be implemented and with full support. Teachers were

asked whether teaming was effective, and whether they had to sacrifice or compromise. Seven out of ten teachers agreed that "teaming" allowed them to participate with each other and work cooperatively. A teacher from team two admitted that it was hard to offer suggestions and share information because most of their teammates were veterans and were not open to accept criticisms or made adjustments to their teaching. Most teachers confided that they actually met at least twice or three times per week. One teacher stated they their team did not meet often and when they did, most teammates do not show up. I believe that situation is the reason that one teacher stated that administration should be more demanding on what they expect from the process. Overall, most teachers felt that everyone worked together well and when it was necessary, they all pulled together. Most teachers emphasized that the majority of their teammates implemented the teaming process, but also stated that a few teachers chose not to. Specialty area teachers reported that they did not meet regularly because they switched between teams too often, so they just did not participate. They also stated that meeting with teams was difficult, because teaching schedules changed, which meant they did not share common planning periods with the teams in which they participated. Those findings were consistent with research by Kruse & Louis (1997) who stated that teaching dilemmas surfaced when special area teachers felt misrepresented. The researchers also emphasized that teachers felt that core subjects are more important than "specials" which may have caused specialty area teachers to feel separated or fragmented from the process. I discovered from meetings with specialty area teachers that workshops never involved these subjects and when they switched teams, the teachers did not invite or welcome them to attend meetings. This

proved to be problematic because collective responsibility for the work of students was undermined.

Effectiveness

An analysis of the data revealed that "teaming" had an effect on student achievement, attendance, and retention, although the effect was not profound. Teachers conveyed that most of the goals that were set at the beginning of the year were accomplished. They highlighted that the overall finished product would be an overall increase in student scores for the 2002 GEPA. An increase in scores would determine whether the students benefited from teacher collaboration and planning.

Most teachers conveyed that although many of their team goals were achieved team meetings were somewhat effective. One teacher admitted that their team often got completely off topic, and felt that eating lunch would be more beneficial. Another teacher stated that the meetings helped to discuss certain student behavior problems and methods on handling these situations, but their creative process had diminished since the earlier part of the year. Five teachers felt very confident that team meetings were effective and allowed them to vent their feelings, thoughts, and share information. These teachers felt that meeting together every week added structure to lesson planning and allowed them to band together to help needy students. Five teachers stated that they felt comfortable communicating within their team and their teammates worked well together. Six teachers felt that their team of teachers always communicated. One teacher conveyed that their team communicated freely at the start of the year, but has since "regressed back in the grind of the old ways." Specialty area teachers did not benefit at all from team meetings.

Results from data were consistent with research in that teaming improved overall student attendance and increased student assessment grades. Results from the GEPA test will reveal whether team goals were effective. The GEPA test was taken the week of March 11-15, 2002, and the results will be public in the summer. Teachers' revealed attendance definitely increased because teams have developed their own behavior modification program. Students and parents met with the team before recommended for suspension for certain infractions. This process has decreased student in and out of school suspensions. Some teachers felt that team teaching has motivated many students to "do the right thing." That occurred because the students knew that the teachers discussed them during meetings and shared information. Two teachers admitted that attendance had increased from last year, but were neutral on whether it stemmed from teaming. The data also revealed that overall scores and achievement increased this year. One teacher stated, "I have more studious students this year. Team teaching helps with the GEPA, because we are teaching the same things and concepts." Another teacher stated, "Student performance and achievement depends on preparation, and teaming helped to prepare new teachers." Some teachers revealed that team lesson planning enabled students to achieve specific skills and improve understanding. The students were more responsive and "dug deeper" for solutions to open-ended questions and problem solving. Consequently, student assessments increased from last year, because each teacher focused on the same topic and skill which allowed for learning reinforcement. Teachers from team three stated that more students were working and passing tests this year. The guidance department revealed that the amount of third marking period failure letters decreased slightly from last year. Two teachers revealed that teaming had not

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made much of a difference with student achievement. One teacher exclaimed that her students would learn regardless of teaming. This particular teacher stated, "If teaming was implemented correctly, sincerely and with global effort- within the school and district, it should increase assessment results. Sadly, trying to improve the GEPA scores only during the 8th grade (6 months of it) no matter how much effort is not enough."

Teachers were asked whether they felt students were learning more due to teaming. Seven out of ten teachers, who responded, felt that students learned more due to teaming. Student discussions initially revealed a consistency with these findings. At the beginning of the year, most students pointed out that they felt fluency between classes that allowed them to relate each subject together. Two teachers did not agree that teaming had an effect at all. One teachers was undecided on whether teaming had an effect on overall student achievement.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FURTHUR STUDY

This study evaluated the relationship between teacher instructional teaming and its effects upon student achievement. To highlight the effects of the teaming process and how it improved professional practices, I described the study's major conclusions and their corresponding implications. Also described are the conclusions and implications of the intern's leadership development. Furthermore, it addresses how the organization changed as a result of the study. Finally, the study recommends the need for further study.

Conclusions/Implications of the study

It appears that the emphasis on teacher teaming and its development was not well planned. Evidence of this manifested itself with the mixed emotions and statements of the teachers and students. Although, most of the teachers who responded seemed to have benefited from common planning periods and professional discussions, teachers did not receive relevant training. Also, teacher schedules were not practical, because special area teachers were left out of the process altogether. In fact, administration did not follow through to ensure the process was properly implemented leaving teachers to do it on their own. The most support attempted by administration was to hire a specialist, who worked with inner city districts that have low tests scores, to offer suggestions and instructional materials for teachers to use in their classrooms. Some workshops focused on that specialist offering a demonstration lesson to a class of students. Most veteran teachers

did not respond well to an "outsider" trying to show them how to teach. Also, the specialist focused on reading and writing, and vaguely addressed the other subjects. Many teachers felt the workshops were not valuable to them. Only english and history teachers seemed to benefit.

Of the ten teachers who responded, six of them have been teaching less than three years. Consequently, the newer teachers responded positively to most of the questions because they benefited the most. These teachers are most influential and search for teaching models to follow. In addition, new teachers need professional development and training to strengthen their teaching skills. All six of the new teachers questioned stated that they enjoyed and learned from the demonstrations.

It appeared that students have benefited from teacher instructional collaboration. Teachers enjoyed planning lessons together using the new backward planning process, and decided what students were to learn. Teachers reported that students were talking about what they learned in their other classes, and how the subjects were relevant to them. Unfortunately, administration decided to resort back to old ways of lesson planning which decreased teacher collaboration planning drastically.

I also discovered that student attendance rates increased slightly from last year, but there was no evidence to prove it stemmed from teaming. Teachers have been able to determine whether a student is cutting class because the same students travel together to each class, enabling them to share student class attendance.

Most students admitted that teaming was fun because of the culminating projects. They believed that linking the subjects together allowed them to understand why they needed to know certain information. I tend to agree with the students who stated in group

discussions that traveling in only one part of the building separated them from meeting other teachers and students. As a result, some students would ask to switch to another team of teachers to be able to see their friends. However, the students also mentioned that they became bored with the same teachers all year long.

The most relevant information of the effects of teaming on student achievement came from the guidance department. Teachers from each team handed in the list of possible student retentions and the list was significantly less than last year. This may be due to teachers' ability to meet and discuss students, enabling them to refer students who needed the most help.

Overall, I discovered that "teaming" had somewhat of an effect on student achievement and teacher collaboration. I feel strongly that if the process was implemented more carefully and enforced with support by administration a more significant result would have been likely. I am confidant that most teachers were interested in the development of teacher teaming, and that the students would benefit greatly. It seemed that the program got off to an appropriate start, but drastically fell off after the first marking period.

Conclusions/Implications of the intern's leadership development

My research has enabled me to re-evaluate my own practice as a professional. I realize that change is important, but to be careful how it is suggested or enforced. In spite of the way administration has implemented teacher teaming, I tend to disagree with the quality, effort, and lack of consistency from the current leadership. Consequently, this study has allowed me to realize the type of leadership that does not achieve effective results.

Although change is inevitable, I have discovered that the leader is responsible for the way in which it is proposed and reached. I also realized the importance of empowering, supporting, and trusting your staff. As a future administrator, I will be more conscious, consistent, and effective. Continuous research has opened my eyes to what is available and happening in education. It is important for me to continuously evaluate my future role and responsibility as a leader.

<u>Organizational Changes</u>

Throughout this study, several words echoed repeatedly. These words included collaboration, sharing, increase, yes, no, and inconsistent. Most teachers put forth effort to implement the teaming process. Those teachers who were reluctant felt undermined and unappreciated. They viewed the implementation and enforcement of the teaming process as useful, but inconsistent. The students perceived it as fun, but redundant.

Basically, the organization has resorted back to the old way of doing things. New teachers changed from being open-minded to confused and frustrated. Common planning periods allowed teachers to meet amongst themselves, but now there is little to no interaction with colleagues in other teams. I discovered that teachers' attitude toward procedural processes demonstrated a reluctance to comply.

At the beginning stages of my research, I thought teaming was promising. Most teachers agreed that change needed to happen because continuing to do the same things provided the same results. Literature on teaming and collegial discussions sparked a willingness and desire to make a difference on the part of the teachers. I believe that the process would have worked better if teachers were bought into it. I believe that most of

the teachers are willing to try something new, but change needs to begin with the leadership.

<u>Recommendations for Further Study</u>

This study produced data about the effectiveness of teacher teaming on student achievement. It is recommended that administration develop a committee of teachers, students, and parents to re-evaluate and revise the current teaming process and curriculum. Establishing such a committee gives everyone affected by the process a feeling of empowerment. This involvement will establish a sense of respect for process and willingness to comply.

It is further recommended that the committee provide a list of issues and concerns that the stakeholders have and provide support and structure as needed. Administrators have to trust and provide the staff with necessary continuous staff development needed to effectively implement the process. Administrators must also be consistent and realize that to implement change, they too must change. Resorting to old methods has made new ones obsolete. This will decrease undesirable behaviors because of lack of clearly stated expectations.

Administrators must research other schools, both urban and suburban, that are effectively implementing teacher teaming. The committee should travel to those schools to gain insight and a visual demonstration of effective team. That will allow teachers to see that it could be done.

It was recommended that teachers be paid to visit the school in the summertime to get a jump-start with the upcoming school year. Principals should create a vision and philosophy for teaming so teachers will buy into the process, and at the start of the school

year offer this process at teachers' opening day orientation. That would allow new teachers an opportunity to become familiar with the teaming process.

In addition, the committee should meet throughout the year to ensure that teaming is truly implemented. This will eliminate past inconsistencies. As a constant reminder of teacher teaming, it is recommended that a vision statement be placed in each classroom, offices, and hallways. It is highly recommended that administration allow teachers to decide on the lesson plan procedures as long as they are aligned with the state's core content standards. Lesson plans are supposed to benefit teachers not administrators.

It is recommended that continuous monitoring of the teaming process be enforced. Also, a specific plan to create a school atmosphere that will instill cohesiveness and trust will contribute greatly to the success of the program. Ultimately, it is the teachers who must implement the program and ensure that students are learning. They need support and empowerment.

A number of other questions resulted from my research. These questions are relevant for further research in the area of teacher teaming in urban school districts:

1. How does the threat of a state takeover affect the daily operations of a school?

2. Are inner-city students who attend charter or parochial schools receiving low? test scores on state tests?

3. What services are available to public schools that are experiencing truancy problems?

4. What staff development is needed to implement successful teacher teams?

5. What did administrators do to ensure the success of the program?

6. What types of curriculums do other districts that implement teaming use and

    how did they get the students to work as a team?

In conclusion, this study in not intended to be the final description of teacher

teaming in urban schools, but it is intended to impress upon the reader knowledge which

is certain to provoke him or her to discover more. In addition, it is an attempt to further

explain a significant evaluation of the practice of a program.

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Appendix A

Research Instrument

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How have common planning periods helped you to learn and relate to the other subject areas?

2. Are the team planning meetings effective? Why or why not?

3. Do all of your team members participate in the team meetings? Do your teammates work cooperatively? How often does your team meet?

4. Did you receive staff development that related to the newly implemented teaming process? Please describe the value it had for you.

5. EXPECTATIONS: Has administration supported the implementation of the teaming process? In what ways?

6. Has backward planning influenced your team and the planning process? How?

7. Do you and your teammates communicate freely? Are teachers discussing teaching and learning more this year? How?

8. According your attendance records, has their been an increase or decrease in student attendance rates? Do you feel that teaming has influenced those rates?

9. According to your assessment results, have overall grades and student achievements increased or decreased? Do you feel that teaming will help to increase GEPA scores?

10. Do you feel that the students are learning more due to the teaming process?

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